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CUBA

Spain and Cuba: A Historical
Sketch

The Red Cross in Cuba

By Clara Barton
As Interviewed by Elbert F. Baldwin

A Plan for Permanent
Cuban Relief

By W. W. Howard

The History of the Week



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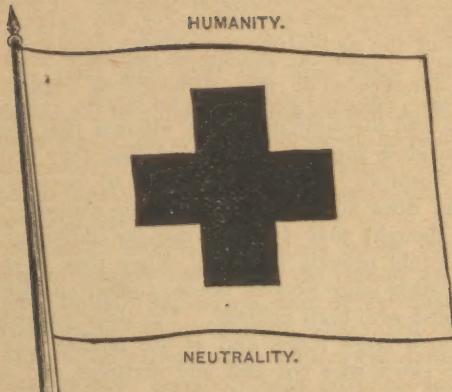
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The Red Cross in Cuba

By Clara Barton

As Interviewed by Elbert F. Baldwin¹



Is there any real resentment on the part of the insurgents or Spaniards because of the aid that we are giving to the people?

Not a particle. I suppose I run the risk of being accused of being a Spanish sympathizer, and courting, in one way and another, Spanish favor. I have not courted it in any possible way. It is a thing one would not dare to do. If they themselves were not disposed to be friendly, they are not exactly a people whom you would be willing to court. I did not call upon his Excellency the Captain-General of Cuba for some time. Finally I did call. I was met by his Chancellor, Señor Don Congosto, a very fine man, and educated in the

United States. It seemed that they had thought it strange that I had not called, and when my card went in, the Chancellor came out of his room and met me with both hands extended, and said that he was very glad that I had come. He asked if I would see General Blanco the next day. At ten o'clock the next day I called at the Palace. Señor Don Congosto met us again, and we went into General Blanco's office—his first office—and met him. His Excellency is a kindly-looking man, a gentle, genial man, a man who meets you with a warm grasp of the hand, as if there were a heart behind it. He did not speak English, but he speaks French fluently. He said he was glad of this relief, and sorry for the condition of the people. He explained fully the working of the government. Then I spoke with him regarding the possibility of the reconcentrados being protected, and getting possession of some land so as to raise crops. He said that ought to be attended to; it should be; would I speak with his committee? Then, when the interview was ended, we went into the second office. It was lined with fine portraits of the Kings of Spain and of the Captains-General of Cuba. His Excellency began a little historical talk, illustrating the early reigns by these portraits. Finally he stopped in front of one and said, "That is the ruler of '76, the year of your war. When America was in trouble, Spain was her friend; now Spain is in trouble and America is her enemy."

In the afternoon I met the committee, and my interview with them was still longer. I met them as Red Cross men, as they all are. The leading men of foreign countries belong to the foreign Red Cross. You never need hesitate, if you meet a man of position or learning in any country, I don't care where, excepting our own, to address him as a Red Cross man, just as one Mason addresses another. I said to them, "I meet you, gentlemen, not as an American and you as Spaniards, but as the head of the Red Cross of one country greeting the Red Cross men of another. I do not come to speak for America as an American, but from the Red Cross for humanity."

I laid the plans I had before them, and they approved. They were already wanting to do the same thing, and so far as I could see would do it, would do the best in their power. But it is hardly possible, even with General Blanco's latest permission, for Spain to give all the protection she would, even within her trochas. Although the Spanish soldier might be controlled, and might not touch the reconcentrados who were attempting to cultivate the land, there is always the native guerrilla to be feared. There is where the danger

¹ Miss Clara Barton has been good enough to tell the readers of The Outlook, through a member of its editorial staff, some salient facts concerning actual conditions of distress in Cuba, and the relief work which is being prosecuted with so much energy and with such happy results. At the request of The Outlook, the interesting interviews described in these questions and answers took place on Wednesday and Thursday of last week at Miss Barton's residence, Glen Echo, six miles from Washington.

lies; it is not so much from the Spanish soldier. The Spanish can generally control their soldiers. All the reconcentrados could cultivate much land, still left to them inside of the trochas and inside of the forts, but as soon as they have got something raised, in comes the lawless guerrilla and takes it. Great destruction has also come from the insurgents. Their policy in regard to that is about as strange and as unnatural as was the cruel policy of Spain in driving the reconcentrados away from their farms.

It is stated that the military hospitals are better than the municipal hospitals; is that true?

The military hospitals are the better now. San Ambrosio, where our "Maine" men were taken, was a large military hospital. You wouldn't call it clean, but there, I suppose, it would be called a fairly well cared for hospital. There were a great many in it.

Are there municipal hospitals in every town?

I don't know. For instance, take the town of Jaruca. It was the first we visited after investigating Havana, and is about twenty or thirty miles from that city. We did not see what you would call a town hospital, and yet there might have been one. I asked for the reconcentrado hospital. They said it had fallen into disuse, it had become so bad; they had no food for it. There has been a dread in many of those towns about putting the sick people in hospitals. For instance, if a child was ill, or a wife, there would be some of their own to take care of them while at home; but if they were to be carried to a bad hospital like that, they might famish. For that reason many of the hospitals had very few persons in them, while in nearly every hut some one or more were sick enough to have been in a hospital. Now that was the case with the reconcentrado hospital in Jaruca, but whether the city or town had another hospital of its own, where its town people went, I cannot say; I did not ask. But the hospital that they attempted to have there for the reconcentrados was, at the moment we found it, something fearful.

How many reconcentrados did you find at Jaruca?

Well, I cannot tell you. We went through the houses of the reconcentrados—their houses are made of palm entirely. These little huts are not unlike the houses from which they were driven. The huts were uncomfortable, dark, earthy-looking; they stand

as thick as possible. There is a village of them. We went through them, finding sometimes only one, sometimes two or three reconcentrados. They all showed evidences of famine. When we had been going about two hours or more, I asked if they had a hospital. They said they had. The authorities were along with us; the mayor, the judge—all of the authorities met us with open arms. They went with us; they had their carriages, and we rode where we could. They showed the same degree of interest that we ourselves showed. They said that they had a hospital, "but it is hardly fit to be seen, and does not at all answer the purpose." I thought that I might use the building; I could provide the rest. They took us to a rather large wooden house, a good enough house with high ceilings. The door opened into a large room, and at the further side we saw a wire cot bed and mattress, and a man on it, lying there, one foot up a little, some kind of a blanket over him. He seemed far away from us. We started to go to him, and there came such a stench that we couldn't go in. It was not what you would expect from anything being filthy, but something worse, like something dead. It warned us instantly that we must not go in, and we fell back a few yards and stopped. As a soldier would say, we called a halt. I said, "We must not give this up. There is a living man there; he must be reached, and somebody must go to him."

I then asked some questions about the place, and the truth revealed itself, that they had no means, they had no money; practically there was no money there. They had given all they could give; everybody was poor. They couldn't clean a place like that, for there was no one to hire. You might think that they would have cleaned it anyway; but remember that in their better days the Cubans have never been accustomed to cleanliness; you can imagine their condition now. I said, "You have men that will work for pay?" "Oh, yes, and be glad to work." "Well, bring them here." Immediately we were surrounded with men who would work for a small sum, and were glad to do anything. They had no water. Their water has to be bought and brought. That is against cleanliness in a place like Jaruca. I asked if there were men who would bring water. Certainly. They had it in barrels. We asked if they had lime; yes, they had. We told them to go for water, to bring all

that was necessary, and we gave them money. We sent them to buy eight or ten barrels of slackened lime, and whitewash-brushes, and brooms, and cloths, and sponges—whatever was necessary to clean that house. We asked how many there were in the hospital. They said there were four in the various rooms. We told them to bring the patients out into the sunshine, and then to clean the place from top to bottom; to wash it thoroughly; to mix whitewash (we sent for glue to make it firm), as fast as they could, and to whitewash it all over, then to scrub the floors and scatter lime; to rake the ground and scatter lime there. And we got them to work, about twenty men, directly.

Then we went to other parts of the city. Some hours later we went back to see how the hospital was progressing. We found every room clean, no smell, nearly all the walls whitewashed, and lime everywhere. The windows were replaced, and the four men had clean blankets and clean clothes, and were really living and trying to eat something. They were put back in the hospital when it would do, and we immediately sent them several tons of food, and a fine physician—Dr. Hosca.

That is a Cuban name; are the Cuban physicians trustworthy?

They have some excellent physicians and surgeons in Cuba. They are of a very high order, altogether different from what you would expect to find. They not only know medicine, but, besides, they are gentlemen to the core. They are graduates of schools in France and America largely, and have a broad education. And there was no jealousy among them. The leading physicians came to Dr. Lesser, whom they might have had reason to look at as an interloper, and were there every day at his clinic, some six and eight and ten of them at a time, and wonderfully attentive, ready to learn anything, and yet they were well-taught men themselves. We asked one of these men to go to Jaruca. He had been a surgeon in the Spanish army; although a Cuban, he was still an officer in the Spanish army, but the Spaniards no longer employed them as officers after the war began. The next day he volunteered to go; and we sent up twenty-five cots, as a beginning, and nice blankets for them, and whatever seemed needful for a hospital. I gave money to him to buy such furnishings as would be required, buckets and bowls and so on, and some clothing for either men or women, who

went in; and cans of condensed milk and malted milk, grains and meals and rice; and he went to commence his hospital there. He went around among the houses, took out the sickest of the reconcentrados, brought them to the hospital, and put them to bed. Everything has gone right from the start, and they would not be satisfied without every few days sending us a letter of congratulation at having got on so well. The hospital is full; it should accommodate fifty.

Was not Jaruca one of the places that had a particularly bad record for suffering?

Yes. Jaruca had a particularly bad record. More persons have died there since the war commenced than its entire population before. Originally it had about twelve thousand inhabitants; more than twelve thousand persons have died and been buried there since the beginning of the war. You can see by that how poor the people must be in a little town like Jaruca, with perhaps twice its numbers rushed in upon them, helpless, to be sustained in some way, two years now. You can see how often the townsfolk have divided with the reconcentrados; how they must have done so. The little money that the reconcentrados might have brought with them was gone almost at once, and they fell entirely upon the charity of the people of the town. It was no wonder that the latter hadn't something to supply that hospital with. But there was a wonderful readiness to take hold of it the moment we took hold. The Spanish commandant of the place wanted to know if he could help in any way. There was something that they couldn't very well find in town. He had it, and sent immediately and obtained it, with the same grace that we would have provided each other. In Jaruca there seemed no one, from the priest—we went with him first into the church and held service—to the mayor, doctor, judge, and the Spanish commandant, who did not help us through that day. Such courtesy as this we received everywhere from the Spanish, and greater than this in some cases. It was at times so extreme that I hardly knew how to take it. I didn't know what to do myself to show suitable acknowledgment. I have been put to great task to think what I should say, what I should do, for all the courtesy that was given.

Is what is needed in Cuba supplies rather than money, or money rather than supplies?

Anything will do. The relief goes on well. Up to our arrival (February 9) six or eight

ships had gone out from this country with supplies. There had only been time for one to repeat the voyage. The Vigilancia had come in twice with fifty tons of supplies, and others came in. All the goods passed through the custom-house, and were brought into the warehouse. We had been through Havana and Los Fosos (literally, the ditches or moats—the reconcentrado shelter in Havana), and were getting the new orphanage in shape.

Our Consul-General at Havana, General Lee, told us what he wanted in the way of an orphanage, and that he had not succeeded in finding a suitable place. He requested that we do so. In forty-eight hours one was found and equipped for use. So much has already been written about that gem of an orphanage that I need not describe it to you. At that very time there arrived at our call Dr. A. Monae Lesser, the chief of the New York Red Cross Hospital, and with him came his estimable wife, a well-known nurse. They immediately assumed entire charge of the orphanage. They took from Los Fosos forty wretched little creatures, from six or seven years old down to as many months, looking like little puppies and kittens picked out of the street. The children were washed and dressed, clad in clean garments; then the tots were put in clean beds, and for three or four days they lay there moaning in their weakness and pain. They were carefully fed and attended, and in a short time forgot their troubles and seemed like other children. The Bishop of Havana consecrated the orphanage, and is its friend. The morning that I left the babes had so far recovered that they were running about, and each came to kiss my hand as I went away. A gentleman, a friend of mine from New York, who happened there just as we were getting started, wanted to do something to help, and we told him to get some playthings for the children. He went away immediately and quickly returned with a great basket full, and you should have seen the delight of those little creatures, none of whom, probably, had ever had a plaything before.

What city came next after Havana and its suburbs?

We had gotten along far enough in Havana and Jaruca. Matanzas came next. Senator Proctor and Colonel Parker went with us. At Matanzas we found a lamentable state of things. There were beds and some kind of covering in the four hospitals, but the beds were not nearly all full, as, from

the lack of supplies, it was feared that the patients would starve outright. We were indeed shocked at such terrible conditions, and told Mr. Brice, the Consul there, that we should go home and send immediately to him a load of supplies, all that could be used in the hospitals, and that we should then follow this with other supplies. This was on the 2d of March, and on the 4th they were sent from Havana. Mr. Elwell, the representative of our Cuban Relief Committee in charge of the Havana warehouse, shipped four tons of pretty good hospital supplies, say fifty cans of malted milk and condensed milk, and grains, and meals, and rice, and flour, and canned fruit and canned meats. We supposed that everything was all right, and drew a long breath because something had gone to those poor hospitals. We were preparing to send more supplies there when we received a letter from the Cuban Relief Committee at New York, saying that the Fern would take seventy tons of supplies to Matanzas, and would I please look out and see that one of our men was on hand to receive them. Of course then there was no need to send anything more. It came round to the 11th, and the other Senators came down; they wanted to go to Matanzas. We were so glad that they—new to such scenes—had not come in time to be shocked by those horrible-looking hospitals! We had received no word from the Consul at all. We went to Matanzas with the Senators. We stopped and dined at the hotel, and learned, upon inquiry, that no supplies had been received. It was our turn to be again shocked. It did not seem possible that they could have been lost, Matanzas being on a direct railway line from Havana, and only fifty miles distant. We went to the station, and found the goods there. They had been there several days, probably since the 4th. I called the attention of the party to the whole matter, describing previous conditions, our prompt shipment of necessary supplies, and the inexplicable delay in their reception and distribution. We then went down to the beach, and there lay the Fern in the harbor, with her seventy tons of supplies direct from New York. A little west of the Fern lay the Bergen, with her fifty tons of supplies from the Philadelphia Red Cross. There were, all told, a hundred and twenty-four tons at that moment waiting within gunshot of those hospitals, and since then more than double that amount has been shipped to Matanzas from various

parts of our country, roused to extra-quick action by the description of the pitiful destitution in that city. There was nobody to stop the outcry. The report actually went out as though nothing had been done, as though there were no relief there, for not until the day after the arrival of supplies was the telegram sent reciting the special suffering at Matanzas.

Our Dr. Hubbell remained there, and the patients in the hospital had a good supper from the waiting supplies that night.

The Governor of Matanzas is one of the finest men I have ever met. All of these Governors are Cubans. General Blanco hasn't a Spanish officer under him. They are Cubans, and Cubans at heart, too. The Governor of Matanzas has an elegant house, perfectly appointed. He showed me every courtesy, setting apart rooms in his house that would be at my service at any time, for any length of time. Everywhere we were received most cordially by the officials, and when I go back I shall expect the same reception from them again, even in the event of war.

What about other cities?

At that time, the 12th or 13th of March, we had gone through Jaruca, Matanzas, Artemisia, Sagua la Grande, and Cienfuegos. In the course of another week we had expected to be in Santiago de Cuba. These are the large cities and towns marking the travel of the island along the lines of the leading railways. Our visits to these places were as replete with interest and satisfaction as were the visits which I have already described. We came in close contact with the authorities at every point, and received from them the most kindly and courteous attention. At Sagua we met Consul Barker. He was doing excellent work among the reconcentrados who had put themselves under his care. Although the number was large, the minute attention given had in great degree prevented the appearance of such suffering as we had found in other places. The Mayor was a kindly disposed man, and was holding hundreds of women and children in special charge. They were depending entirely upon the Mayor and our Consul for help and comfort. Since that time shiploads of supplies have reached Sagua. Our field-agent, Dr. Hubbell, assisted by competent persons, has the direction of the Sagua hospitals and the distribution of their necessary supplies.

At Cienfuegos and vicinity, from some

cause or other, the activity of a greater number of industries has been permitted; consequently less suffering is manifest, but it must not be inferred that there are no hungry or destitute in that large and fertile district.

If the information received by the State Department concerning starvation in Cuba had been published last summer and supplies sent, would present distress be so extreme?

No, hardly. I suppose that conditions were very bad even before President McKinley came to his place.

Would it not seem to have been his duty as soon as possible to have recommended that some relief be sent to Cuba?

My answer must be,

Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these, "It might have been."

But President McKinley is a man of very kind heart. He is a benevolent man. Nor should it be forgotten that Cuba has been open and free to all travelers. American tourists were there. Why didn't some of them publish statements as to the distress? Why was it left to President McKinley alone?

It was not left to him alone, of course, but his official position would carry with it its corresponding responsibility?

Let me repeat that thousands of Americans were in Cuba while people were starving. The ports were open; Americans went there; they traveled; they enjoyed themselves; they saw beautiful Cuba; they looked at the luxuriant growth; they admired the trees and flowers; they paid their money, had a good time, and came away. It seems strange to me that tourists did not speak out their minds, did not say something about the starving. Besides, the visitors would be more apt to see the suffering, for the reconcentrados were in the cities; they were driven out of the country.

Some people ask if the giving of half a million dollars for the relief of the Cubans would not better be from private individuals than from the Government?

No, for private individuals are being drawn upon for a great amount. There is one class of people that give. Those that do give, give and give again; and those that don't give, don't give at all. Those that have given would be called upon to give again. It seems to me now that it would be a graceful thing for the Government to give the people a rest. Something else will come pretty soon. Those people ought not to be called upon too much.

I think they have done wonderfully. It seems to me now it might be well to give them a respite.

Should Government supplies go in Government vessels?

They ought not to go in Government vessels; they should go in merchant vessels. But those people must be fed. We have sent a great deal; we are sending a great deal; we shall continue to send supplies. Congress voted unanimously fifty millions for defense. Now, I don't think it would be a bad thing to vote one million, or one-half million, for relief. Let it lie there in the Treasury; if it isn't needed, it won't be drawn; if it is needed, it is there. I some-

times think of that in connection with the Red Cross plans and work. The Government each year appropriates nobody knows how many hundreds of thousands of dollars for the War Department for tearing men to pieces: not a dollar for mending them up again. It seems to me, if we are a charitable people, and if our Government means charity, now that we have voted fifty millions for tearing men in pieces, might we not put a half-million in the Treasury to be drawn from to feed the people who are in need? Therefore I think when we get so patriotic that we can vote anything for war, and can't vote a few dollars for the needs of these starving people, it is a little too patriotic.

A Practical Plan of Relief in Cuba

By William Willard Howard

MY investigation of the condition of Cuba was entirely unpremeditated. Early in February, while returning to New York from an exploring trip in the interior of South America, I found that, by taking passage in a casual steamship from Colombia to the south coast of Cuba, I could save several days on the time of the regular passenger line service. I intended, upon landing in Cuba, to go at once to Havana and take the first available steamer to the United States. I was not seeking to investigate Cuba, for, after more than two years' service in Armenian relief work, I had little desire again to encounter face to face the starvation of a nation. But to one who had known Armenia in the bitterness of persecution it was impossible to remain unmoved and inactive in the presence of Cuba, and in less than two days I was in the interior of the island carefully inquiring into the condition of the people.

During most of the month of February I gave my entire time to this work, visiting towns, villages, cities, sugar-factories, plantations, small farms, ruined houses, Spanish forts, burning cane-fields, and insurgent camps. My investigations ended at Havana, where I met Miss Clara Barton distributing to local committees the provisions sent from the United States in response to President McKinley's appeal. Before leaving Havana for New York I had so far decided upon my

plan of industrial relief for the reconcentrados as to discuss a general outline of it with Miss Barton. Since that time I have been able to work it out more satisfactorily and in greater detail.

Let us try to apply to the problem of relief in Cuba the same quality of common sense that we give to our business affairs.

We must first determine what form of relief will do the least harm to the persons who receive it. Shall we make professional paupers of the helpless reconcentrados by doling out to them each day, for an indefinite time, free soup and old clothes? or shall we devise some method by which we may give them relief without doing injury to their self-respect and independence of character? If we do not wish to bring upon them a moral blight no less destructive than that physical death which ended the woe of so many of their fellows, we must put them in the way of supporting themselves.

To support themselves the reconcentrados must work. But in the present disturbed condition of affairs in Cuba how is it possible for them to work? Let us first consider who they are and what they can do.

A little more than a year ago these reconcentrados were small farmers and farm laborers living in the rural districts throughout Cuba. They were known as pacíficos—that is, peaceful persons who took no part in the war, General Weyler asserted that they